



Nice Hotel owner Terry Parkes sits on the steps of 'Steps' his first restaurant.

PHOTO: ANDY JACKSON/STUFF

Stepping aside for development

STEPHANIE MITCHELL

The veranda-style building where New Plymouth's Terry Parkes got his first step up as a restaurateur is up for removal.

The former Steps restaurant on Gover St, most recently known as Kassaba, is on the market for removal.

When Parkes took over the restaurant 30 years ago Steps was the only vegetarian restaurant in New Plymouth.

"I didn't know much about vegetarian food at all. I thought how can you make a meal out of veges?" he said.

It was a risk for Parkes but one that ultimately paid off.

"I poured everything I had into it. It could have sent me broke. But it was a great learning curve."

"I don't feel it's an iconic building that needs to be saved."

Terry Parkes

The new venture didn't get off to a great start when two girls called in sick on his first day as owner. He started to panic and didn't know what to do so he called his grandmother. It was she who gave him some advice that led to one of his famous dishes.

"She said 'oh dear just do a macaroni cheese'. So I did."

The family input to Parkes' first venture was one of his fondest memories of the place. His late mother helped him out and his father could be found making bucket loads of spuds. Some of his closest friends today also come from working together at Steps.

"They're good memories, happy memories. We had a lot of fun. But you can't live on memories."

Parkes said he loves to keep hold of the old, which is a big reason he bought Nice Hotel, but he wouldn't be shedding tears over the removal of his first restaurant.

"I don't feel it's an iconic building that needs to be saved."

However he does believe there is a market in New Plymouth for the ethos Steps had in terms of dietary trends.

"If I wanted an easier lifestyle than being a hotelier I'd buy it back and reopen it. It'd be killer."

Steps came at a time when New

Plymouth's coffee boom had not quite taken off. It was one of the only places with a coffee machine and the menu consisted of only long blacks, short blacks, lattes, and cappuccinos. He decided to get out of the coffee game when orders started getting out of hand.

"Someone ordered a decaf, soy milk, macchiato, with sucra instead of sugar - all things I'd never heard of. So I said, 'do you want a coffee or not?'"

The Gover St property is managed by Ekdahl Property Management, who could not discuss what would be replacing the former restaurant which is for sale for removal.

It isn't the only change on the street. The Black Harp pub, just next door, has closed to be transformed into the Gover Street Bistro.